Clare Secrist P.1

**Should child soldiers be rehabilitated?**

What were you doing at nine years old? Playing hide and seek? Or playing sports? For child soldiers at nine years old they learned torture, kill, and rape. Only the “lucky” ones were able to get rehabilitated. I believe that only some of the child soldiers getting help isn’t right and that all child soldiers should get the help they need and be rehabilitated.

Murhabazi Namegebi, director at a rehab center in the in the Democratic Republic of Congo says "Six-thousand child soldiers have been through this center since it opened 20 years ago. And the children, they go back to their villages and they tell other children carrying a gun is not the way.” Now that we know that these rehab centers are successful we know that it will help children who were former soldiers who are struggling with post-traumatic stress get help.

Vital Mukuza, director at the Centre for Professional and Artisanal Apprenticeship (CAPA) in Bukavu disagrees with Murhabazi. Mukuza doesn’t believe child soldiers are easy to rehabilitate and he says, "It's extremely difficult. They are aggressive, irritable and prone to violence and vandalism, constantly posing a threat to others. They don't respect rules or authority and are used to taking whatever they want," he adds. "It takes months for them to adapt to normal life." This creates problems for people because they don’t feel comfortable with these soldiers who are very violent and aggressive to try and work with them but doesn’t that make them want to rehabilitate these former child soldiers more so they won’t be as violent?

Now many of them have nowhere to go because they believe their families will not allow them back into their villages because of all the awful things they have done. These children’s toys were taken away as a child and instead placed with a gun they deserve to have a better life than this. Doesn’t everyone deserve a peaceful future?